

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A deck assembly for a self-propelled, walk-behind rotary lawn mower, the deck assembly comprising a deck defining a cutting chamber for housing a cutting member, the deck having a top wall portion spanning above the cutting chamber between a front portion of the deck and a rear portion of the deck, the deck operable to receive either a rear wheel drive transmission proximate the rear portion of the deck, or a front wheel drive transmission proximate the front portion of the deck.
2. The deck assembly of claim 1, wherein the rear wheel drive transmission is operable to couple to a prime mover attached to the deck via a rear drive belt located below the top wall portion of the deck, and the front wheel drive transmission is operable to couple to the prime mover via a front drive belt located at least partially above the top wall portion of the deck.
3. The deck assembly of claim 2, wherein the front wheel drive transmission is locatable substantially below the top wall portion of the deck, and further wherein the front portion of the deck includes an opening operable to permit coupling of the front drive belt to the front wheel drive transmission.
4. The deck assembly of claim 3, further comprising a blocking plate operable to substantially cover the opening when the mower is configured for use with the rear wheel drive transmission.
5. The deck assembly of claim 2, wherein the front drive belt is substantially identical to the rear drive belt.
6. A deck assembly for a walk-behind rotary lawn mower, the deck assembly comprising:

a deck defining a cutting chamber operable to house a cutting member,
wherein the cutting chamber is bound at least in part by a rear enclosure member;

a rear discharge port located, when the mower is in an operating
configuration, on a rear portion of the deck; and

a duct of substantially rectangular cross section extending through the rear
enclosure member between the cutting chamber and the rear discharge port, the duct
having a first, uppermost surface and a second, lowermost surface, wherein the first,
uppermost surface and the second, lowermost surface both form substantially
horizontal planes.

7. The deck assembly of claim 6, further comprising a mulch plug operable to
engage and selectively plug the duct.

8. The deck assembly of claim 6, wherein the first, uppermost surface is
formed at least in part by an underside of the deck.

9. The deck assembly of claim 6, wherein the duct is formed at least in part by
the rear enclosure member.

10. The deck assembly of claim 6, wherein the rear enclosure member defines at
least a portion of the second, lowermost surface.

11. The deck assembly of claim 6, wherein the rear enclosure member is secured
to the deck with one or more fasteners.

12. The deck assembly of claim 6, wherein a duct axis of the duct is
substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the mower.

13. The deck assembly of claim 12, wherein the duct axis of the duct is laterally
offset from the longitudinal axis of the mower.

14. A deck assembly for a walk-behind rotary lawn mower, the deck assembly comprising:

a deck defining a cutting chamber operable to house a cutting member, wherein the cutting chamber is bound at least in part by a rear enclosure member;

a rectangular rear discharge port located, when the mower is in an operating configuration, on a rear portion of the deck; and

a duct of substantially rectangular cross section extending through the rear enclosure member between the cutting chamber and the rectangular rear discharge port, the duct defining a duct axis that is substantially parallel to a longitudinal axis of the mower.

15. The deck assembly of claim 14, wherein the rectangular rear discharge port has a transverse width and a vertical height, wherein the transverse width is greater than the vertical height.

16. The deck assembly of claim 14, wherein at least a portion of the duct is formed by an underside of the deck.

17. The deck assembly of claim 14, wherein at least a portion of the duct is formed by the rear enclosure member.

18. The deck assembly of claim 14, further comprising a transmission proximate the rear discharge port and operable to power two rear wheels, wherein the transmission is drivingly coupled to a prime mover via an endless belt.

19. The deck assembly of claim 18, wherein the endless belt extends through the cutting chamber along an underside of the deck.

20. The deck assembly of claim 18, wherein the endless belt extends through a portion of the rear enclosure member.

21. The deck assembly of claim 20, wherein the endless belt is at least partially enclosed between an underside of the deck and a belt cover secured to the underside of the deck.
22. The deck assembly of claim 21, wherein the belt cover has a shape that substantially conforms to a shape of the underside of the deck.
23. The deck assembly of claim 21, wherein the belt cover abuts the rear enclosure member.
24. The deck assembly of claim 14, further comprising a side discharge port located, when the lawn mower is in the operating configuration, generally along a lateral side portion of the mower, the side discharge port having a door associated therewith, the door operable to selectively cover the side discharge port.
25. A walk-behind rotary lawn mower, comprising:
a deck assembly comprising:
a deck defining a cutting chamber operable to house a cutting member, wherein the cutting chamber is bound at least in part by a rear enclosure member;
a side discharge port located, when the mower is in an operating configuration, generally along a lateral side portion of the deck, the side discharge port having a door associated therewith, the door operable to selectively cover the side discharge port;
a substantially rectangular rear discharge port located, when the mower is in the operating configuration, on a rear portion of the deck; and
a duct of generally rectangular cross section extending between the cutting chamber and the rear discharge port, the duct defined in part by a lower surface and an upper surface, wherein both the lower surface and the upper surface form substantially horizontal planes;

a plurality of wheels operable to support at least the deck assembly in rolling engagement with a ground surface;

a prime mover coupled to the deck assembly; and

a cutting blade located within the cutting chamber, the cutting blade rotatable under control of the prime mover.

26. The lawn mower of claim 25, wherein the duct is formed at least in part by the rear enclosure member.

27. The lawn mower of claim 25, wherein the rear enclosure member defines opposing sides of the duct, the opposing sides forming substantially vertical planes.

28. The lawn mower of claim 25, further comprising a collection apparatus operable to fluidly couple to the rear discharge port.

29. The lawn mower of claim 25, wherein one or more of the plurality of wheels is operatively driven by the prime mover.

30. The lawn mower of claim 25, further comprising a mulch plug operable to engage and effectively seal the rear discharge port.

31. The lawn mower of claim 25, wherein the door further comprises a latching device operable to substantially immobilize the door when the door covers the side discharge port.

32. A self-propelled, walk-behind rotary lawn mower, comprising:
a deck assembly comprising a deck defining a cutting chamber for housing a cutting member, the deck having a top wall portion spanning above the cutting chamber between a front portion of the deck and a rear portion of the deck, the deck operable to receive either a rear wheel drive transmission proximate the rear portion

of the deck, or a front wheel drive transmission proximate the front portion of the deck;

a plurality of wheels operable to support at least the deck assembly in rolling engagement with a ground surface;

a prime mover coupled to the deck assembly; and

a cutting blade located within the cutting chamber, the cutting blade rotatable under control of the prime mover.

33. The lawn mower of claim 32, wherein the rear wheel drive transmission is operable to couple to the prime mover via a rear drive belt located below the top wall portion of the deck, and the front wheel drive transmission is operable to couple to the prime mover via a front drive belt located at least partially above the top wall portion of the deck.